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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the contemporary differences in the response of black and white wives to factors that play a determining role in the decision of a wife to seek paid employment. Data, in the form of husbands' responses to interviews, were collected from a national sample of husband-wife families who resided in the continental United States. Fourteen major variables were examined and were organized into four groups: (1) family, (2) economic, (3) environmental, and (4) labor force. The research findings indicated factors important in determining the employment of black wives are not the same as those relevant to whites and the factors important to both groups have different influences on each race. Recommendation for changes in certain laws and social policy (social security laws, income tax laws, employer's maternity practices, and unemployment) were made based upon the findings. (JH)

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RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN WHY WOMEN WORK

Joyce O. Beckett

REVISED DRAFT

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A paper presented at the Conference sponsored by the Center for Continuing Education of Women, The University of Michigan, January 17, 1978.

Women are an important segment of the work force. Since the turn of the century, women's share of the total labor market and their labor force participation rate has more than doubled. In 1975 women represented 40% of the civilian labor force and 46% of all women worked (Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1975). Eli Ginzberg, Chairman of the National Commission for Manpower Policy in 1976, called the flood of women into the work force "the single most outstanding phenomena of our century," (New York Times, September 12, 1976). This phenomena is reflected in distinct trends for various segments of the total population. For example, the labor force participation rate for white women has increased more than the rate for black women; the rate for married women has risen more rapidly than that of women of any other marital status; and the increase in the rate for married women with preschool children has been more dramatic than any other group of married women.

Within the context of the intact husband-wife family, this paper focuses on the differences in the labor force activity of black and white women. Intact family units are stressed because the married woman residing with her spouse represents the element of greatest importance in terms of the composition of the female labor force. In 1975, these women constituted three-fifths of the female labor force (Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1975). Race is a salient factor because the labor force participation of black wives historically has been, and continues to be, distinct from that of white wives. At any point in time, black wives have a higher labor force participation rate than whites, but the increase in the participation rate of black wives has been slower. Consequently, the longstanding difference between the races has narrowed considerably. In 1890 the proportion of black wives

who worked was more than ten times as great as the proportion of whites (22% versus 2%). By 1975, the rate for black wives was only one and one-fifth as great as whites (53% versus 44%)(A Statistical Portrait of Women in the U.S., 1976).

The history of black and white wives' employment suggests either: 1) The factors important in determining the labor force activity of black wives are not the same as those relevant to white wives and/or 2) The same factors are important to both races but the influence of these common variables vary by race. This paper reports the findings of the author's research that explores the contemporary differences in the response of black and white wives to factors that play a determining role in the decision of a wife to seek paid employment. The research explores the extent to which black and white wives have a different labor force response to a common set of variables.

DATA SOURCE AND STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE

The data used for this study were a national sample of husband-wife families who resided in the continental United States. These families were a part of A Panel Study of Income Dynamics, an ongoing longitudinal study sponsored by the Institute of Social Research at The University of Michigan.[1] The panel study began in the spring of 1968; that year, and each spring since, heads of household have been interviewed. The entire sample of the panel study included approximately five thousand families, but this study focused only on a sub-sample of these families. Data drawn from the 1975 interviews of black and white husband-wife families with

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[1]Detailed analysis of the sampling procedure is reported in Survey Research Center, A Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Volume I (Ann Arbor, Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1972), pp. 9-11. A copy of the interview schedule is included in that document.

wives less than 56 years of age were used. This sample consisted of 2,768 families, of whom 818 were black. Since the respondents were husbands, the data were biased to the extent that wives might have given different responses.

This study extended previous work on race and female labor force participation in its use of: 1) contemporary data for families of various socioeconomic levels, 2) a broad view of the factors influencing employment, 3) the family as the unit of analysis, and 4) a separate multivariate analysis by race. The rationale for these four research strategies is briefly discussed below.

The use of current data is important because one difficulty in studying the employment of wives is the rapidly changing nature of the phenomena under observation. Using a sample that was interviewed when the recent changes in the nature of female labor activity had already begun allows one to study the contemporary factors influencing married women's employment. Consideration of data from families of various socioeconomic levels provides a better opportunity to view the current relationship between the financial resources of the family and the labor force participation of wives.

The determinants of the employment of black and white wives are complex and involve the combination of variables from several areas, such as demography, econimcs and sociology. Traditionally, the study of female labor activity has been segmental with the choice of variables for investigation defined by the academic discipline of the researcher. Instead of selecting influences on wives' employment based on one academic discipline, this study combined economic, sociological and demographic factors. Rather than focusing on one particular characteristic which affects a wife's employment, the question of this study was what are the relative influences of a number of characteristics representing various academic disciplines on a wife's propensity to work.

The use of the family, as opposed to individuals, as the unit of analysis reflects a systems perspective. This theoretical framework suggests it is within the context of the family that decisions are made about which family members will work, and when, in the family life cycle, a particular member will supply labor. Data on the family as a unit also allow for inclusion of more variables. In addition to characteristics of the wife, variables for the total family unit, such as size and composition, can be studied in order to have a more complete understanding of the factors that facilitate or inhibit a wife's participation in the labor market.

Separate analysis by race permits one to discern if, and what, factors have a differential influence on the employment of black wives. Race is a complex and global concept that includes more than the biological divisions of human beings in terms of physical traits that are genetically transmitted. Race also encompasses the social situations that are peculiar to a biological group of people and the reactions of that group and the wider society to the social circumstances of the particular racial group. For example, the black race in America refers to persons who are often considered inferior and who are systematically excluded from societal advantages. The distinct social situations of black and white families in America may affect these groups' perception of, and relation to, the labor market. The social consequences of race suggest that race may statistically interact with other independent variables in explaining labor force participation. For this reason, as well as the fact that historically the labor activity of black and white wives had been different, this study analyzes separately the data for blacks and whites using a multivariate technique (Multiple Classification Analysis).[1] This technique indicates what

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[1]For a description of this technique see Frank Andrews, Multiple Classification Analysis, Second Edition, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1973.

variables help to explain labor force participation, that is, why women work.

MAJOR VARIABLES

The wife's labor force status was considered an outcome of the interaction between family members and the interaction between the family and the employment system within a context of environmental constraints and facilitators and, consequently, was viewed as the dependent variable. This variable was a gross indication of employment activity; it indicated whether the wife worked at some point during 1974. It reflected the basic family decision of whether a wife would work. A value of one (1) was given to wives who worked and a value of zero (0) was given to wives who did not work during the year. The mean value of the dependent variable was the proportion of employed wives.

A great many characteristics may be associated with wives' employment. The 14 variables included in the analysis were based upon a review of relevant literature with certain limitations imposed by the particular data set.[1] (See Table 1 for a list of the variables.) These variables were conceptually organized into four groups: 1) family, 2) economic, 3) environmental, and 4) labor force. Family variables were characteristics of individuals in the family or the family as a unit. The number of adults and children in the family are two examples. Economic variables consisted of income characteristics and the financial situation of the family (excluding the earnings of the wife). Environmental variables were factors external to the family system over which the family had little or no control. These variables influence the availability of employment. The unemployment rate is one example. Labor force variables were characteristics that describe the family's interactions with the employment or labor force system. The occupation of the husband is an example.

[1] The variables included in this analysis draw in part from the work of Duran Bell, Glen Cain, Bowen and Finegan, Sookon Kim, James Morgan, Herbert Parnes and James Sweet.

FINDINGS

Findings will describe first the frequency distributions of the variables and secondly the results of the multiple classification analysis. With reference to the former, the distributions will be noted with reference to the wife's labor force status and the four groups of independent variables - family, economic, environmental and labor force. The findings are shown in Table 2.

The data showed 65% of the black wives and 61% of the white wives were employed at some point during 1974.[1] While black wives were a little more likely to be employed, there was little difference in the labor force rates by race.

The distribution of black and white families on family variables indicated some important differences that may influence racial differences in employment. The wife's education was used to indicate her employability in terms of skills and earning potential. The proportion of black wives (42%) with no high school diploma was twice as high as whites (20%), while the proportion of white wives (13%) with a college degree was almost twice as great as blacks (7%). White families (32%) were more likely than blacks (24%)

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[1]The labor force participation rates in this study were greater and the difference between the rates for blacks and whites were smaller than the national rates from U. S. Census data. The Census reported minority wives had a labor force participation of 52% and whites 42% in 1974. There were three major differences in the calculation of the labor force rates in this study and that of the census reports which probably account for the observed differences. First, unlike the calculation for census data; this study excluded the unemployed, those seeking work but not actually employed, from the labor force rate. Secondly, the time frame for observation differed. This study used employment status over a period of one year, while census data observed labor force activity during a particular month or week. A larger proportion of women work at some time during a year than in any one month or week of a year. Thirdly, the age of the sample differed. The census includes persons 16 years and over. In this study the maximum age is 55, thus, the base for the labor force rate is smaller than the census figures.

to be childless and less likely than blacks to have preschool aged children. To the extent that children, especially preschool children require additional time and energy from the wife, the distributions showed black wives may have less time for employment or may be more likely to require childcare services in order to work.

In terms of economic variables, white families were financially better off than blacks. The proportion of black families below the poverty level was three times that of whites. The income of each of these families, omitting the wife's wages, was less than the family's economic need.[1] Twice as many white families as blacks were in the upper economic level, having incomes at least three times the family's need. To the extent that wives work for economic reasons, the distribution of families indicates black wives may be more likely to work than whites.

When environmental variables were considered, the data showed black families were more likely than whites to reside in areas where employment opportunities were limited. Over half of the blacks lived in the South compared to one-fourth of the white families. The South is the least industrialized area of the country. About the same proportion of black and whites lived in areas where the unemployment rate was extremely high, greater than 10%. However, whites were about twice as likely as blacks to reside in counties with the lowest unemployment rate.

And finally, considering the labor force variable, the distribution of the husband's occupation showed considerable difference by race. The proportion of white husbands employed in professional and technical occupation was four times as great as that of blacks. Of the nine occupation categories,

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[1]The United States Department of Agriculture annual need standard was used as a measure for the economic need.

blacks were concentrated (67%) in the four lower occupation levels, whites were concentrated (68%) in the five higher occupations.

In summary, the distribution of black and white families on the independent variables showed several important distinctions that may influence racial differences in wives' employment. One might think that these differences would explain any differences in the labor force participation of black and white wives. The difference in the labor force rate for blacks and whites would be explained by the differences in the distributions only if the variables were equally important to both races and each race responded in the same manner to the variables. For example, the number and age of children have a negative influence on the wives' employment. The more children in a family the less likely the wife to work, especially if the children are pre-schoolers. Since black families had more and younger children than whites, one might expect black wives to have a lower labor force rate than whites. Actually, this expectation would be realistic only if this variable had identical influences and the same relative importance to other predictors for both races.

The results of the MCA for predicting wives' labor force status in terms of the 14 variables appear in Table 1. The discussion of the findings will highlight racial differences in the following: 1) the adequacy of the model to explain wives' labor force participation, 2) the relative importance of the independent variables, and 3) the relationships between salient predictors and the dependent variable.

The model explains the labor force activity of black wives much better than that of white wives. The fraction of variance in the dependent variable explained (R-squared) for the two groups was .240 and .134 respectively. This finding indicates that using a common set of predictors one can better understand the reasons black wives work.

TABLE 1

GROSS AND NET EXPLANATORY POWER OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES TO PREDICT WIVES LABOR FORCE STATUS[1]

Predictors	Conceptualized Variable Groups	Blacks $\varepsilon^{2(a)}$	Blacks $\beta^{2(b)}$	Blacks Rank	Whites ε^2	Whites β^2	Whites Rank
Education of Wife	Family	.069	.067	1	.028	.014	3
Occupation of Husband	Labor Force	.053	.064	2	.020	.013	5
Age and Number of Children	Family	.055	.060	3	.070	.078	1
Unemployment Rate in County of Residence	Environmental	.008	.032	4	.011	.009	6
Number of Adults in Household	Family	.031	.031	5	.006	.002	12
Income/Needs Ratio	Economic	.031	.031	6	.007	.027	2
Size of City	Environmental	.004	.026	7	.005	.004	8
Labor Market Conditions of Unskilled Females Compared to Males	Environmental	.020	.025	8	.001	.003	11
Distance from Central City	Environmental	.009	.016	9	.006	.004	9
Labor Market Conditions of Unskilled Blacks Compared to Whites	Environmental	.007	.014	10	.004	.007	7
Geographical Region	Environmental	.004	.010	11	.003	.001	14
Housing Situation of Family	Family	.007	.008	12	.009	.001	13
Age of Wife	Family	.003	.008	13	.019	.014	4
Family Dependents Not Residing with the Family	Economic	.006	.002	14	.004	.004	10
R^2 (adjusted)			0.240			0.134	
N			818			1950	
Mean of Dependent Variable			0.654			0.607	

The data showed the independent variables most important in explaining that the labor force status of black wives were not the same as those most salient for white wives. The relative importance of the variables was determined by ranking the predictors by their net explanatory power (β^2 in Table 1), that is, the influence of each predictor after the effects of other variables had been taken into account. Of the 14 predictors, the wife's education was the most powerful variable for black families while the number of children and the age of the youngest was most important for whites. In no case did a variable have the same rank for both races. Geographical region, for example, was the least important of the 14 variables for whites but ranked eleventh for blacks. Family dependents residing outside the household was the least important variable for blacks but ranked tenth for whites. These findings indicate black wives and white wives work for different reasons.

Many discussions of the reasons women work indicate the primary factor is economic need.[1] It is important to note the findings do not support that assertion. The income level of the families, excluding the wife's wages, ranked second out of fourteen in relative importance for whites and sixth for blacks. Compared to the importance of other variables, the economic situation of the family was less relevant to black wives' employment than to whites. This, however, does not mean economic need is not an important predictor; it indicates that other variables were most salient in predicting wives' labor force status.

In addition to comparing the importance of predictors within each race, it is also revealing to compare the power of a predictor for each race. Of the fourteen variables, twelve were more powerful in explaining the labor force status of black wives than for white wives.

[1]For example, see U. S. Department of Labor, Why Women Work, (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, July 1976), p. 1.

For example, the number of adults in the home was an important predictor for black wives' employment but had no predictive significance for whites. Only the wife's age and the number of children and the age of the youngest had greater predictive power for whites than for blacks (see Table 1). It was the fact that more variables had greater predictive power for blacks compared to whites that resulted in a substantially larger amount of explained variance for blacks. The particular variables in the analysis model were more helpful in understanding black wives' employment.

Finally, we look at the relationship between predictors and the wives' labor force activity. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. In general, black and white wives had similar labor force responses to the predictors. For example, the higher the family income, the less likely the wife worked; the greater the unemployment rate, the less likely the wife worked; the higher the wife's education level, the more likely she was employed; the greater the number of children, the less likely the wife worked, especially if one child was a preschooler.

While the direction of the relationships was similar for both races, the intensity of the relationships varied by race. For example, the socio-economic level of the family had less influence on black wives employment than on whites. Black wives labor force participation rate decreased only 7 points while whites decreased 21 points as the socio-economic level of the families rose from below poverty level to the highest income level. On the other hand, education had a stronger relationship with black wives' employment than with whites. As the education level rose from those without a high school diploma to those with a college degree, the labor force rate of black wives increased 28 points while whites increased 18 points. It is important to note that black wives received less reward from higher education than whites. The labor

TABLE 2

UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED MEANS OF SELECTED VARIABLES PREDICTING WIVES' EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Predictors	Blacks				Whites			
	Number of Cases (unweighted) (1)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (2)	Unadjusted Mean (3)	Adjusted Mean (4)	Number of Cases (unweighted) (5)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (6)	Unadjusted Mean (7)	Adjusted Mean (8)
Income/Needs Ratio								
Less than 1.00	262	24.7	.620	.734	177	7.8	.643	.712
1.00-1.49	211	23.3	.576	.580	258	11.6	.601	.653
1.50-1.99	157	17.5	.789	.753	339	16.0	.651	.684
2.00-2.99	147	19.6	.595	.545	702	31.3	.636	.639
3.00 or more	41	14.9	.755	.667	574	33.3	.551	.498
Number of Children and Age of Youngest								
No Children	155	23.5	.743	.742	586	32.4	.759	.757
1; 6-17 years	114	15.7	.784	.814	334	17.3	.632	.673
1; 1-5 years	100	13.2	.675	.631	195	8.5	.571	.525
2; 6-17 years	94	13.7	.635	.582	292	15.6	.565	.571
2; 1-5 years	66	7.7	.554	.599	154	6.4	.453	.419
3 or more; 6-17 years	214	19.5	.586	.615	299	16.0	.466	.458
3 or more; 1-5 years	75	6.6	.350	.341	80	3.8	.284	.282
Education of Wife								
0-11 years	380	41.9	.510	.515	434	19.7	.514	.541
12 years	239	27.1	.770	.749	688	36.5	.560	.572
13-15 years	168	23.5	.740	.755	572	30.2	.652	.641
B.A.; Graduate Work	27	7.4	.788	.792	253	13.4	.770	.719
No Response	4	0.2	.333	-.002	3	0.2	.604	.593
Unemployment Rate								
Less than 6.0%	113	11.9	.738	.725	387	19.9	.632	.648
6.0-8.9%	206	30.6	.650	.642	668	33.8	.642	.624
9.0-10%	221	24.0	.651	.701	308	15.7	.627	.621
10.1-12.0%	141	12.0	.571	.537	283	13.8	.503	.520
More than 12.0%	71	14.7	.631	.549	263	14.5	.549	.558
No Response	66	6.8	.695	.858	41	2.4	.668	.716
R^2 (adjusted		0.240				0.134		
N		818				1950		
Mean of Dependent Variable		0.654				0.607		

force rate of black wives with a college degree was only 4 points greater than the black wives with a high school diploma. The difference for comparable groups of white wives was 15 points.

To summarize the findings, the comparison of black and white families revealed several differences. The empirical testing of identical labor force participation models showed little difference in the proportion of employed black and white wives. The following differences, however, were apparent: 1) the amount of variance explained for black wives was almost twice as great as for whites, 2) the variables most important in explaining black wives employment were not the same as those most salient for whites, 3) the predictive power of most variables was greater for blacks than for whites, and 4) the intensity of the relationship between predictors and labor force status varied by race. The data supports the implications from the history of womens' employment discussed in the earlier portion of the paper. That is, contemporary data indicates that factors important in determining the employment of black wives are not the same as those relevant to whites and the factors important to both groups have different influences on each race. Why women work is a complex question. The data indicate the distribution of families on important variables, the predictive power of the variables and the relationship between the variables must be considered in order to address the question.

IMPLICATIONS

During the seventies, women entered the job market at a pace called "extraordinary" by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the President's Council on Economic Advisors in 1976.[1] For the first time in the history of women's

[1] "Women Entering Job Market at an Extraordinary Pace," The New York Times, September 12, 1976, p. 14.

employment, the modal husband-wife family contained a working wife. This study showed the majority of both black and white wives worked in 1974. Unfortunately, laws and social policy have not kept pace with the changing pattern of wives' employment. Social security laws, income tax laws, employer's maternity practices and policy concerning unemployment do not reflect the reality of wives' employment. Using the findings, the following discussion focuses on sexual and racial biases reflected in social policy as it influences working-wife families.

Social Security Laws

Social security laws directly discriminate against working women in terms of proportion of wages paid and benefits received. In effect, the tax is regressive; low wage earners pay a greater proportion of their income in social security taxes than high wage earners. Women usually earn less than men and the black women in this study earned less than whites. The tax, then, places a heavier burden on working women, especially blacks.

Working wife families actually loose social security benefits. When both the husband and wife are covered by social security, the wife can either draw her benefit or one-half of her husband's, whichever is greater. She cannot draw both in spite of the fact that she and her husband paid taxes on thousands of additional dollars, as compared with payments made by the man whose wife never worked.[1]

This study showed most wives were working and no longer completely economically depend on the husband. While the annual income of most employed wives was less than half of the total family income, the wives' economic contribution to the family was valuable. It often moved the family into a

[1]Martha W. Griffiths, "Requisites for Equality," in Juanity Kreps, ed. Women and the American Economy, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 148-149.

higher socio-economic level. Even non-working wives provide services to their families which are costly to purchase. For example, most wives in the sample were also mothers. These individuals provided child care and homemaking services. Social security laws, however, do not credit these homemaking and child care tasks as an economic contribution to the family.

Personal Income Tax Laws

Income tax laws discriminate against working-wife families in tax rates and child care and domestic help deductions. A married man with a non-working wife pays from 17 to 20 percent less than a single person in income taxes on a given income. If the man has an employed wife, however, the couple has a higher income tax rate than employed single persons. To certain couples the penalty of these laws is very heavy. One working couple in New York City divorces each December, files taxes, and remarried the following year.[1]

This study showed the presence of children was an important predictor for wives' employment status. Wives with children were less likely to work than childless wives. The majority (77% of blacks and 68% of whites) of the families had at least one child. Tax laws regarding child care deductions are important to these families. The Revenue Act of 1971 greatly liberalized child care deductions but stipulated that both spouses must be employed full time and file a joint return in order to claim the deduction. Many wives do not work full time, year round and thus would be ineligible for a child care deduction.[2]

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[1] Ann Arbor News, January 15, 1977, p. 10, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[2] U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1975 Handbook on Women Workers (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 38-39.

Those wives who might benefit by working full-time face another barrier - child care provisions. No deductions may be made for payments to relatives or dependents living in the home of the taxpayer. The results of this study suggested that additional adults in the homes of black families were associated with higher labor force rates. These additional adults, who often are relatives, may have provided child care. These black families, however, would not be eligible for a child care tax deduction.

While the mode of child care was not available in the 1975 wave of the panel study, this variable was included in the 1974 interview. Results showed that in 38 percent of the black families and 25 percent of the white families, child care was provided by relatives. Black families, then, were a little more likely to be influenced by the lack of opportunity for a child care deduction. Child care arrangements by family income indicated families in the lowest quintile were twice as likely as those in the highest quintile to rely on relatives for child care.[1] This finding indicates the economically disadvantaged families were less likely to benefit from child care deductions.

Another aspect of the sexual and racial discrimination of the tax system pertains to domestic servants. The wages paid to domestics employed in a private home are not deductible by the employer. Such a deduction would facilitate wives employment. It would encourage an increase in the domestics' wages and would decrease the household duties for wives who employ the domestics. More black wives than white are employed in domestic service positions and more whites than blacks employ domestics; both races would benefit from a tax deduction for domestics.

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[1] Katherine Dickinson, "Child Care" in Five Thousand American Families, Volume III ed. by Greg Duncan and James Morgan (Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, 1975), pp. 222-225.

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Maternity Benefits

Laws and customs pertaining to maternity benefits discriminate in that they have limited coverage for situations that are exclusively applicable to women. Maternity benefits affect women in that they: 1) restrict the employment of pregnant and post-pregnant workers; 2) deny disability insurance; and 3) restrict unemployment compensation. More wives are employed than ever before and their attachment to the labor force is stronger. These factors have increased wives' reluctance to accept long term retirement from the labor force as soon as a child is expected. The number of working wives with at least one preschool child is steadily increasing. The results of this study showed that black wives with preschool children had an employment rate of 68 percent while 57 percent of comparable white wives worked.

The influence of maternity benefits is complex since the states regulate these procedures. Although the federal government guidelines adopted the position that pregnancy and child birth are temporary disabilities, several states do not reflect that opinion. In 1969, for example, six states had prohibitions against the employment of pregnant and immediately post-pregnant women. Only five states had temporary disability insurance for employees unable to work because of non-job related disabilities. Even states with temporary disabilities insurance continue to have restrictions on maternity leave. In 1975 nineteen states had special disqualifications for pregnancy in their unemployment compensation laws.[1]

Child Care

Policy concerning child care is one area that may have profound effects on the employment of wives. In recent years, the most rapid gains in employment for married women have occurred among wives with preschool children.

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[1] 1975 Handbook of Women Workers, op. cit., pp. 339-341.

About one fifth of the white wives and one third of the black wives in this study had at least one preschool aged child. These mothers were less likely to work than those with the same number of children but no preschool child. Child care arrangements are particularly important for mothers of young children. A federal advisory panel found that in 1976 one out of every three mothers of preschool children worked. The licensed day care centers, however, could accomodate only 900,000 of these six million children.[1] It is evident that adequate day care facilities are lacking.

Women are voicing their views on the need for additional child care facilities and actively participating in strategies to develop child care supports. Mothers were instrumental in developing after school programs in Brooklyn, Massachusetts, for example. Working mothers have also been instrumental in revising private school schedules as indicated by the Children's All Day School in New York City. Women are not waiting for governmental policy to help their plight, instead they are themselves bringing about necessary changes to support their employment. They have even published a manual on how to plan, organize and operate an extended day program for child care.[2] Social policy, however, could support the efforts of these families.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate in the county of residence had more predictive power and a greater constraining influence for black wive's employment than for whites. These findings suggest that in times of economic recession (1974), there is a stronger demand for employment of white rather than black wives.

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[1] Ann Arbor News, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 10, 1976, p. 1.

[2] Stella Chess and Jane Whitbead, "The Working Mother," Working Woman II (February 1977), p. 16.

Longitudinal analysis of the Parnes data supports this interpretation and helps to explain the relatively smaller increase in black wives' labor force participation compared to whites. Blau, studying the differential influence of unemployment on entry and exits rates, found that in periods of economic decline, black wives' overall labor force rates decreased while whites increased. Black wives' entry rates declined while their exit rates remained relatively constant. Thus, black working wives were able to continue working as the economy declined. High unemployment, however, prevented non-working black wives from securing employment. Increased unemployment did not prevent white wives from entering the labor force nor did it force those working out. The result was white wives' overall labor force rate increased during the economic downturn.[1]

One of the most important warnings of future unemployment cost for women is the complacency associated with the acceptance of the higher unemployment rates for women. Rather than attempting to reduce the sexual-racial differences in unemployment rates, many policy makers rationalize higher overall unemployment rates suggesting the unemployment situation may not be so critical since women make up a larger proportion of the unemployed than ever before. This response reflects the attitude that women are secondary wage earners and their employment can be sacrificed to provide jobs for the "primary" bread winner, the husband. Public policy must be careful not to make women, especially blacks, the scapegoat for persistently high unemployment rates.

In summary, the federal government is committed on paper to a policy of full employment, equal pay, equal employment opportunities and the economic growth that these require. The effect of various social policy on women's

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[1] Francine D. Blau, "Longitudinal Patterns of Female Labor Force Participation," in Parnes, et al., Dual Careers, Volume IV, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), pp. 36-42.

employment indicates that these commitments do not include working wives. This does not suggest that the observed effect of social policy was deliberate. Most of the laws and policy discussed were instituted before the surge of wives into the labor force. Laws and policy, however, are often no longer appropriate to a society where the majority of wives work.

The author is not suggesting that social policy should support or reinforce one family style over another; nor should public policy penalize a particular family pattern. The choice of life style should remain a family decision. True neutrality in public policy, although desired, is difficult to achieve in a complex society. Policy makers, however, should be made aware of the differential effect of policy for various segments of society. Research such as this study provides empirical data necessary to increase policy maker's knowledge of the various influences of present policy and the need for new social policy concerning working-wife families.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 3

UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED MEANS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES PREDICTING WIVES' EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Predictors	Blacks				Whites			
	Number of Cases (unweighted) (1)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (2)	Unadjusted Mean (3)	Adjusted Mean (4)	Number of Cases (unweighted) (5)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (6)	Unadjusted Mean (7)	Adjusted Mean (8)
Region								
Northeast	49	11.8	.722	.709	418	25.3	.584	.614
North Central	113	24.0	.651	.718	590	31.3	.592	.595
South	604	56.9	.651	.628	632	27.4	.651	.621
West	52	7.3	.585	.567	310	16.0	.597	.592
City Size								
500,000 or more	366	41.7	.654	.571	533	31.0	.584	.572
100,000-499,999	153	24.0	.659	.676	453	23.1	.653	.611
50,000-99,999	77	6.7	.617	.745	254	13.0	.640	.636
10,000-49,999	83	10.4	.594	.704	375	17.9	.611	.655
Less than 10,000	139	17.2	.702	.762	335	15.0	.549	.587
Labor Market Conditions of Unskilled Females vs Males								
Better	170	20.7	.662	.693	155	8.5	.594	.531
Same	355	36.5	.687	.653	339	15.5	.593	.629
Worse	187	29.6	.655	.683	856	44.8	.610	.624
Much Worse	24	3.5	.315	.279	518	26.8	.620	.593
No Response	82	9.7	.635	.627	82	4.4	.561	.580
Unemployment Rate								
Less than 6.0%	113	11.9	.738	.725	387	19.9	.632	.648
6.0-8.9%	206	30.6	.650	.642	668	33.8	.642	.624
9.0-10%	221	24.0	.651	.701	308	15.7	.627	.621
10.1-12.0%	141	12.0	.571	.537	283	13.8	.505	.520
More than 12.0%	71	14.7	.651	.549	263	14.5	.549	.558
No Response	66	6.8	.695	.858	41	2.4	.668	.716

TABLE 3-Continued

Predictors	Blacks				Whites			
	Number of Cases (unweighted) (1)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (2)	Unadjusted Mean (3)	Adjusted Mean (4)	Number of Cases (unweighted) (5)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (6)	Unadjusted Mean (7)	Adjusted Mean (8)
Income/Needs Ratio								
Less than 1.00	262	24.7	.620	.734	177	7.8	.643	.712
1.00-1.49	211	23.3	.576	.580	258	11.6	.601	.653
1.50-1.99	157	17.5	.789	.753	339	16.0	.651	.684
2.00-2.99	147	19.6	.595	.545	602	31.3	.636	.639
3.00 or more	41	14.9	.755	.667	574	33.3	.551	.498
Occupation of Husband								
Professional, Technical	31	5.7	.657	.609	334	18.2	.700	.672
Managers, Officials	19	5.0	.889	.829	232	13.1	.617	.637
Self Employed	11	2.8	.283	.238	96	5.5	.432	.483
Clerical, Sales	59	10.6	.504	.435	184	9.5	.670	.657
Craftsmen, Foremen	143	17.5	.659	.665	431	21.8	.590	.599
Operatives, Kindred	243	27.9	.705	.727	317	15.2	.572	.601
Laborers, Service Workers	231	21.3	.633	.678	142	6.6	.608	.578
Farmers and Farm Managers	4	0.3	.647	.776	63	3.1	.450	.462
Miscellaneous[1]	38	4.7	.842	.777	103	4.6	.610	.549
Not in Labor Force	39	4.3	.343	.558	48	2.5	.545	.509
Wife's Age								
Less than 25	250	28.4	.665	.603	486	22.4	.728	.676
25-34	227	25.3	.694	.684	674	32.0	.587	.607
35-44	182	23.7	.621	.635	392	21.9	.576	.636
45-55	159	22.6	.645	.708	398	23.6	.546	.513
Education of Wife								
0-11 years	380	41.9	.510	.515	434	19.7	.514	.541
12 years	239	27.1	.770	.749	688	36.5	.560	.572
13-15 years	168	23.5	.740	.755	572	30.2	.652	.641
B.A.; Graduate Work	27	7.4	.788	.792	253	13.4	.770	.719
No Response	4	0.2	.333	-.002	3	0.2	.604	.593

TABLE 3-Continued

Predictors	Blacks: Number of Cases (unweighted) (1)	Blacks: Percent of Population (weighted percent) (2)	Blacks: Unadjusted Mean (3)	Blacks: Adjusted Mean (4)	Whites: Number of Cases (unweighted) (5)	Whites: Percent of Population (weighted percent) (6)	Whites: Unadjusted Mean (7)	Whites: Adjusted Mean (8)
Labor Market Conditions of Unskilled Blacks vs Whites								
Better	41	1.9	.405	.382	100	4.8	.508	.556
Same	356	42.3	.679	.585	842	41.6	.593	.566
Worse	308	34.5	.642	.677	673	35.6	.636	.637
Much Worse	31	11.7	.655	.596	138	7.5	.626	.681
No Response	82	9.7	.635	.564	197	10.5	.591	.635
Housing								
Own	405	55.3	.661	.646	1336	70.3	.578	.616
Rent	372	41.9	.662	.682	549	26.6	.683	.591
Neither	41	2.8	.412	.419	65	3.0	.591	.532
Number of Children and Age of Youngest								
No Children	155	23.5	.743	.742	586	32.4	.759	.757
1; 6-17 years	114	15.7	.784	.814	334	17.3	.632	.673
1; 1-5 years	100	13.2	.675	.631	195	8.5	.571	.525
2; 6-17 years	94	13.7	.635	.582	292	15.6	.565	.571
2; 1-5 years	66	7.7	.554	.599	154	6.4	.453	.419
3 or more; 6-17 years	214	19.5	.586	.615	299	16.0	.466	.458
3 or more; 1-5 years	75	6.6	.350	.341	80	3.8	.284	.282
Distance from Central City								
Less than 5 Miles	199	26.9	.615	.636	284	14.8	.617	.603
5-14.9 Miles	258	28.6	.684	.703	487	26.3	.652	.639
15-29.9 Miles	87	11.5	.650	.599	313	17.0	.617	.634
30-49.9 Miles	43	4.5	.612	.536	222	10.9	.531	.544
50 Miles or More	136	16.8	.725	.729	407	18.7	.589	.587
No Response	93	11.7	.591	.569	237	12.3	.579	.588

TABLE 3-Continued

Predictors	Blacks				Whites			
	Number of Cases (unweighted) (1)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (2)	Unadjusted Mean (3)	Adjusted Mean (4)	Number of Cases (unweighted) (5)	Percent of Population (weighted percent) (6)	Unadjusted Mean (7)	Adjusted Mean (8)
Dependents Outside the Family								
Yes	85	12.5	.748	.707	200	11.5	.691	.687
No	731	87.4	.641	.647	1750	88.5	.596	.596
No Response	2	0.1	.500	.626	---	---	---	---
Number of Adults								
Two	611	73.9	.665	.651	1654	83.2	.623	.612
Three	105	14.5	.769	.809	217	12.4	.509	.558
Four or More	102	11.6	.445	.481	79	4.4	.570	.645
R^2 (adjusted)		0.240				0.134		
N		818				1950		
Mean of Dependent Variable		0.654				0.607		

[1]Miscellaneous includes occupations such as armed services, and protective service workers.